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# Harvard Lecturer Buys New Republic for \$380,000

## New Owner Plans No Changes in the Liberal Weekly

By RICHARD L. MADDEN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 12 — The New Republic, founded in 1914 "less to inform or entertain its readers than to start little insurrections in the realm of their convictions," announced today the second change of ownership in its 60-year-history.

The weekly magazine, which describes itself as "a journal of politics and the arts," was purchased for about \$380,000 by Martin Peretz, a 35-year-old lecturer on social studies at Harvard University who was a major financial backer of the Democratic Presidential campaigns of Senators Eugene J. McCarthy in 1968 and George McGovern in 1972.

In a joint statement, Mr. Peretz and Gilbert A. Harrison, the editor in chief and owner for the last 27 years, said that no changes were planned in the magazine's format, content and policies or in its relatively small staff, which over the years has included Herbert Croly, Walter Lippmann, Charles Merz, Edmund Wilson, Henry A. Wallace, Bruce Bliven, Theodore H. White and George Soule.

### Few Knew of Shift

And apparently in keeping with the spirit of freewheeling independence that the magazine has sought to maintain over the years, not everyone connected with the New Republic was aware of the impending change in ownership, even though reports of the sale have been published in recent days.

"I didn't know it had been sold," Richard L. Strout of The Christian Science Monitor, who has written TRB, the magazine's weekly Washington column for the last 30 years, remarked to a caller before the announcement was made.

"It just shows what a good source I am," he said with a chuckle. "Do I still have a job?"

"Marty Peretz is about the same age as I was when I took over The New Republic," said Mr. Harrison, the 58-year-old editor, as he sat in his shirtsleeves planning the layout of next week's issue in the comfortable corner office in the gray-painted brick

town house in downtown Washington that has been the magazine's headquarters for 18 years.

"It seemed to me sensible in thinking about the long-range future of the magazine — to keep up the same quality over the next couple of decades — that the way to do this is to bring in somebody young with the age and the means to see it through," Mr. Harrison said.

### Top Responsibilities

Mr. Peretz will become chairman of the editorial board, but Mr. Harrison said, "I will remain in complete charge of the editorial policy, the content, the hiring and the firing, and will go on just as I am for a minimum of three years. After that we'll take another look at it."

Thus no sweeping changes seem to be immediately in store for the magazine, which has been identified with progressive and liberal causes since its founding in 1914 "by some coincidence of symbolism," according to Eric F. Goldman, the historian, on the edge of Greenwich Village in New York City next to a home for wayward girls and across the street from a theological seminary.

The founders were Willard Straight, whose family had been ministers and missionaries, and his wife, Dorothy, the daughter of William C. Whitney, the financier, who had been so impressed with Mr. Croly's ideas in "The Promise of American Life," that they asked him how to implement his ideas.

The result was The New Republic, with Mr. Croly as the first editor. Mrs. Straight, who later remarried, retained family ownership of the magazine until 1954, when it was sold to Mr. Harrison.

According to Mr. Bliven's autobiography, "Five Million Words Later," published in 1970:

"Office legend says that the first style sheet had only two items on it, which read: The New Republic will spell 'God' with a small 'g' and 'Negro' with a capital 'N.' If there ever was such a rule, it survived only a short while. Though the paper always spelled Negro with a capital, I never saw the name of the

A Name for a Column

It was Mr. Bliven who

gave the magazine's Washington column its name when it first ran in 1926. "With the presses waiting for me, I had to dig up a name in a hurry," Mr. Bliven said in his book. "I had come to the plant in lower Manhattan by a subway then called the Brooklyn Rapid Transit, so I turned the initials backward and signed the piece 'T.R.B.' — in recent years the periods were dropped and the signature became TRB.

The magazine was a sounding board for many of the ideas that became part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. "But we were never Roosevelt idolaters, and I am still being damned to this day for my refusal to join the ranks of hero worshippers," Mr. Bliven wrote. President Kennedy was a regular reader. In 1968 the magazine called for creation of a new political party headed by Senator McCarthy and did not endorse Hubert H. Humphrey, the eventual Democratic nominee. "Lots of old friendships were strained, if not snapped, but that's what this magazine is all about," Mr. Harrison said.

In recent years with John Osborne covering the White House and with the relative recent acquisitions of Walter Pincus, writing about Watergate and Stanley Karnow, writing on foreign affairs, the magazine's circulation has risen to about 100,000.

### 'Never Been Better'

"We've never been in a better financial position than we are now," Mr. Harrison said, although he acknowledged that in the past "we gauged our success by the size of our losses. You can say the losses ranged from about \$200,000 to \$50,000 a year."

Mr. Peretz said in a telephone interview that his financial resources were "comparable to that of Mr. Harrison." According to their friends, Mr. Peretz's wife, Anne, is a descendant of a family associated with the Singer sewing machine company.

Mr. Peretz said that The New Republic "made a bit of money this year" and added:

"I don't have terrible anxieties about it and I don't

Mr. Harrison said that readers and advertisers were not accustomed to making up

the financial losses of magazines and "certainly there has been a decline in the number of independent journals of opinion, but I stopped worrying about that a long time ago."

The magazine's goal, he said, is "the opportunity to reflect on political affairs, books and the arts and attempt to pass some judgment that's detached as possible, not too much influenced by passing fads, or interests of one kind or another or allegiance to this group or that group. That's a high-minded statement, but the only question is how well we do it."

"I learned from Walter Lippmann if you're going to be in this business you don't have politicians for friends," he observed. "You have them as acquaintances and sources."

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